

# MEPA/NEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST

## PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of Proposed State Action:** Grant of Easement for a buried telephone to serve remote subscriber.

2. **Agency Authority for the Proposed Action**

Montana Code Annotated 87-1-209

Acquisition and sale of lands or waters

3. **Name of Project**

Denton Upgrade - Telephone Network Overbuild

4. **Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor (if other than the agency)**

Central Montana Communications, Inc.

P.O. Box 1220

Havre, MT 59501-1220

406-394-7807

800-332-1201

5. **If Applicable:**

**Estimated Construction/Commencement Date**

June 1, 2006

**Estimated Completion Date**

September 30, 2006

**Current Status of Project Design (% complete)**

100% complete

6. **Location Affected by Proposed Action (county, range and township)**

Beckman Wildlife Management Area

Fergus County, 18 North, 15 East, Section 1

Fergus County, 18 North, 16 East, Section 4

Fergus County, 19 North, 16 East, Section 31, 32, & 33

7. **Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected that are currently:**

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(b) Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation	<u>0</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
		Forestry	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	Rangeland	<u>5.13</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

8. **Map/site plan:**

see attached sheets

**9. Narrative summary of the proposed action or project including the benefits and purpose of the proposed action:**

Triangle Telephone Cooperative, Inc. have found it necessary to upgrade their existing copper plant in the area. By replacing the existing cable, more reliable service will be obtained by the customer with less maintenance for the telephone company.

Copper telephone cables are generally buried to a depth of 30 to 36 inches by means of either a direct mounted cable plow or trenching. The transitory area of disturbance during cable installation rarely exceeds the width of the equipment or 10 feet, while the actual cable placement operation directly impacts no more than 6 to 10 inches of soil.

Upon completion of the cable placement operation, areas of disturbance are restored to an acceptable\* condition by means appropriate to local conditions, e.g., compaction, grading, hand raking, etc.

\*As deemed by local landowner or controlling entity

**10. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.**

**(a) Permits:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

**(b) Funding:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
N/A	

**(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:**

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Type of Responsibility</u>
N/A	

**11. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:**

Ethos Consults  
Havre, MT 59501

Ethos Consults prepared an archaeological survey and the State Historical Preservation Organization concurred with it.

## PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

### 1. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

#### A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?			x			
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?			x			
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		x				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		x				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		x				
f. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

1a. The effect of a rip in the ground will be minor. There is no soil being removed and ground will be compacted to its original state.

1b. There will be minor disturbances to the soil due to the rip of the plow. The plow rip will be compacted and disturbed vegetation will be reseeded with native plants.

2. <u>AIR</u>  Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		x				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		x				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		x				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		x				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs? (Also see 2a)		x				

\* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

\*\* Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

\*\*\* Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

\*\*\*\* Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

f. Other:		x				
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**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Air Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated*	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		x				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		x				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		x				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		x				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		x				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		x				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		x				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		x				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		x				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		x				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		x				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c)		x				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a)		x				
n. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

- \* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- \*\* Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- \*\*\* Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- \*\*\*\* Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

4. <b>VEGETATION</b>	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment
	Will the proposed action result in:	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant	
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?				x		
b. Alteration of a plant community?				x		
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			x			
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?			x			
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			x			
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?			x			
g. Other:			x			

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

4a. Minor disturbances to the vegetation will occur due to the tracks and rip of the plow. Disturbed areas will be reseeded with native plants.

4b. There will be some impact to some of the native grasses, but it will not be a significant amount of area. Disturbed areas will be reseeded with native plants and monitored for noxious weeds for a period of three years.

\* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

\*\* Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

\*\*\* Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

\*\*\*\* Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

<b>** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		x				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		x				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		x				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		x				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		x				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		x				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		x				
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)		x				
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		x				
j. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

## **HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

<b>6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			x			
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?			x			
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		x				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		x				
e. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

6a. Existing noise levels will be elevated during the time of construction on the line. This is only a temporary impact so it classifies as a minor effect.

\* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

\*\* Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

\*\*\* Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

\*\*\*\* Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

6b. The noise levels of the area will be higher during the time of construction but this is a temporary effect.

<b>7. <u>LAND USE</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		x				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		x				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		x				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		x				
e. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

<b>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		x				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		x				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		x				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		x				
e. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

- \* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- \*\* Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- \*\*\* Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- \*\*\*\* Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

<b>9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		x				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		x				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		x				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		x				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		x				
f. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

<b>10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u></b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		x				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		x				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		x				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		x				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		x				
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.		x				
g. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

10e. Central Montana Communications Inc. is paying for the construction of the new telephone cable to service the public in this area. There will be no revenue generated for the FWP but improved service will be provided to the Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) office.

10f. The FWP will not be responsible for any maintenance to occur on the phone line. Central Montana Communications, Inc. will pay around \$1500 / year for maintenance to this telephone line.

\* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.

\*\* Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)

\*\*\* Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

\*\*\*\* Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.



<b>** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		x				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		x				
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		x				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		x				
e. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

<b>12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u></b>  <b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>	<b>IMPACT *</b>				<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated *</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
	<b>Unknown *</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor *</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>		
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		x				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		x				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		x				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a)		x				
e. Other:		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Land Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

12a. ETHOS Consults of Havre, MT has done an archaeological survey and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has concurred with it.

- \* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- \*\* Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- \*\*\* Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- \*\*\*\* Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u>  Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *				Can Impact Be Mitigated *	Comment Index
	Unknown *	None	Minor *	Potentially Significant		
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		x				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		x				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		x				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		x				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		x				
f. ***For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)		x				
g. ****For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		x				

**Narrative Description and Evaluation of the Cumulative and Secondary Effects on Water Resources (Attach additional pages of narrative if needed):**

- \* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or can not be evaluated.
- \*\* Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM)
- \*\*\* Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.
- \*\*\*\* Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

## **PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW, CONTINUED**

- 2. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:**

No action alternative would create a hardship for the subscriber being served. An alternative route for the telephone cable would create much more disturbance than the requested route.

- 3. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:**

The Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has the right to require Central Montana Communications, Inc. to restore the disturbed areas to their pre-existing condition. Whereas native grasses be reseeded, affected areas be graded and compacted, and weed monitoring for a given period of time.

- 4. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required (YES/NO)? If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action.**

Based on the environmental impact of this project, an EIS is not required. The area of land being disturbed is not large and the project will not have any significant negative effects on the land. The EA is the appropriate level of review for a project of this nature.

- 5. Describe the level of public involvement for this project if any and, given the complexity and the seriousness of the environmental issues associated with the proposed action, is the level of public involvement appropriate under the circumstances?**

A legal notice will be placed in the Lewistown newspaper considering the project will be in Fergus County. The legal notice will contain what the project is, when it will start, where it will be at and contact information for obtaining a copy of the Environmental Assessment form.

- 6. Duration of comment period, if any.**

A 30 day comment period will be sufficient for this project considering the minimal opposition expected.

**7. Name, title, address and phone number of the person(s) responsible for preparing the EA:**

Heberly and Associates Engineering  
Brent Finneman  
P.O. Box 1311  
521 Fourth Street  
Havre, MT 59501  
(406) 265-6741

**PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT**